

Academic Integrity Inclusivity and Accessibility Study: Research Project Brief

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Abstract

Purpose: The main goal of this project is to assess the academic integrity, policy, procedure, and supports at one community college using multiple frameworks of equity, diversity, and inclusion (EDI), including principles of Universal Design for Learning (UDL), decolonization and Indigenization, and stress and mental health.

Methods: A mixed methods approach to collect both qualitative and quantitative data is used to answer the research question. Academic integrity policy and procedure documents are qualitatively analyzed using current exemplar principles (Bretag et al., 2011b) and a tool created by the research team that assesses inclusivity, accessibility, decolonization, and mental health. Experiences of key stakeholders in the academic integrity process are collected using survey, focus group, and interview methods. It is our direct intention to empower academic integrity stakeholders through their voices, experiences, and their participation to drive change and to engage in community building.

Data sources: Publicly available academic integrity policy and procedure documents and stakeholder experiences collected through surveys, focus groups, and interviews from one Canadian community college form the basis of the data for this project.

Implications: The project is significant to the college specifically and to higher education institutions more broadly as the multi-framework tool, developed under Creative Commons license, may be used by policy analysts and practitioners to assess academic integrity processes toward reforming policy, procedure, and supports. The project also assesses teaching practices which may help identify stressors and gaps in support for administrators to address in their institutions.

Key words: academic integrity, policy analysis, community college, Canada, inclusive, equity, decolonization, mental health

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Project Objectives

The main goal of this project is to assess the academic integrity, policy, procedure, and supports at one community college using multiple frameworks of equity, diversity, and inclusion (EDI), including principles of Universal Design for Learning (UDL), decolonization and Indigenization, and stress and mental health.

The specific objectives of the project are to:

- Identify gaps in academic integrity policy, procedure, and supports as they relate to equity, diversity, and inclusion (EDI), including principles of Universal Design for Learning (UDL), decolonization and Indigenization, and stress and mental health.
- Evaluate policy and procedures using existing best practices for academic integrity policy development.
- Create an assessment tool for other higher education institutions to use to assess the accessibility and inclusivity of their academic integrity policy, procedure, and supports using multiple frameworks.
- Develop recommendations to reform academic integrity policy, procedure, and supports.

Research Question

The primary research question for this project is:

How does the college address equity, diversity, inclusion, accessibility, decolonization, and mental health in their academic integrity policy, procedure, and supports?

Project Architecture

The project employs a mixed methods approach to answer the research question. As such three methodologies for data collection run concurrently involving different members of the research team.

Focus groups follow the survey of stakeholders. Co-creation of recommendations takes place after data collection and data analysis.

Academic Integrity Policy and Procedure Document Analysis

- Research Team: Principal Investigators: Corrine D. Ferguson (Academic Integrity Researcher), Margaret A. Toye (Academic Integrity Researcher); Co-investigators: Lindsey Fiebig (Student Success Counsellor), Jennefer Rousseau (UDL Specialist), Janalee Morris (Learner EDI Specialist), Jaime Fiddler and Miriam Perry (Decolonization and Indigenization Specialists).

Survey of Key Stakeholders

- Research Team: Principal Investigators: Corrine D. Ferguson (Academic Integrity Researcher), Margaret A. Toye (Academic Integrity Researcher)

Focus Groups

- Research Team: Principal Investigators: Corrine D. Ferguson (Academic Integrity Researcher), Margaret A. Toye (Academic Integrity Researcher)

Student Interviews

- Research Team: Principal Investigators: Corrine D. Ferguson (Academic Integrity Researcher), Margaret A. Toye (Academic Integrity Researcher)

Analysis and Output: Co-creation of Recommendations

- Research Team: Principal Investigators: Corrine D. Ferguson (Academic Integrity Researcher), Margaret A. Toye (Academic Integrity Researcher); Co-investigators: Lindsey Fiebig (Student Success Counsellor), Jennefer Rousseau (UDL Specialist), Janalee Morris (Learner EDI Specialist), Jaime Fiddler and Miriam Perry (Decolonization

and Indigenization Specialists); Co-creators: student, instructor, librarian, writing support, instructor support research participants.

Research Design

The research team acknowledges that we are “standing on the shoulders of giants” as the design for this project is influenced by those who have led the groundwork in assessing academic integrity policy, procedure, and supports (Bretag et al., 2011a, 2011b; Davis, 2022; Eaton et al., 2021; Eaton et al., 2023; Grigg, 2010; Miron et al., 2021; Stoesz et al., 2019; Stoesz & Eaton, 2020). To fully address the research question, it is necessary to assess not only academic integrity documents that outline policy and procedure, but to also elicit stakeholder experiences of the process and supports. Therefore, we use a mixed methods approach to collect both qualitative and quantitative data. It is our direct intention to empower academic integrity stakeholders through their voices, experiences, and their participation to drive change and to engage in community building.

Methods

The four data collection methods used in this project are document analysis, survey, focus groups, and interview. Steps involved in executing each method are outlined below.

Document Analysis

1. Creation of analysis tools/guidelines
2. Document collection
3. Qualitative data analysis

Stakeholder Surveys (i.e., instructors, library support, writing support, instructor support)

1. Creation of survey tools
2. Pre-testing
3. Tool revision

4. Recruitment
5. Data collection
6. Quantitative data analysis (close-ended questions)
7. Qualitative data analysis (open-ended questions)

Focus Groups (i.e., instructors, library support, writing support)

1. Creation of focus group questions
2. Pre-testing
3. Tool revision
4. Recruitment
5. Data collection
6. Qualitative data analysis (open-ended questions)

Student Interviews (i.e., students who have been through the process with an alleged or actual academic integrity violation)

1. Creation of interview tool
2. Pre-testing
3. Tool revision
4. Recruitment
5. Data collection
6. Quantitative data analysis (close-ended questions)
7. Qualitative data analysis (open-ended questions)

Conceptual framing

Multiple conceptual frameworks are utilized for this project including:

Principles of Exemplary Academic Integrity Policy (Bretag et al., 2011b)

- Access
- Approach
- Responsibility
- Detail
- Support
- Equity (Eaton et al., 2023)

Equity, Diversity, Inclusion

- Developed by the EDI expert on the research team.

UDL Principles (CAST, 2018)

- Engagement
- Representation
- Act & Expression
- Developed by the UDL expert on the research team.

Decolonization and Indigenization

- Developed by the decolonization and Indigenization experts on the research team in consultation with existing research from Indigenous perspectives (e.g., Eaton, 2022, 2024; Lindstrom, 2022; Poitras Pratt & Gladue, 2022) and Indigenous community experts.

Stress Process Model (Pearlin et al., 1981)

- Stress
- Resources
- Mental Health
- Developed by the mental health expert on the research team.

Research Ethics

The collection and analysis of academic integrity policy and procedure documents does not require research ethics approval as materials are accessible on a public website and contain no confidential information.

As survey, focus group, and interview methodology involve interaction with human participants, it must comply with the Tri-Council Policy Statement on Ethical Conduct for Research Involving Humans. Therefore, we follow the procedures set out in 500-3-2 Ethical Conduct for Research Involving Human Participants Procedure including submission of a research ethics application to the Research Ethics Board at Bow Valley College. We are committed to conducting this research with ethical and scientific integrity detailed in 500-3-3 Integrity in Research and Scholarship Procedure.

The Research Ethics application will be submitted April 11, 2024.

Significance

The project is significant to the college specifically and to higher education institutions more broadly as the multi-framework tool, developed under Creative Commons license, may be used by policy analysts and practitioners to assess academic integrity processes toward reforming policy, procedure, and supports. The project also assesses teaching practices which may help identify stressors and gaps in support for administrators to address in their institutions.

Project Management

The project is managed by Principal Investigators (PI), Corrine D. Ferguson and Margaret A. Toye who conceptualized the research. Project tasks will be assigned to members of the research team and to the co-creators of the recommendations.

Timeline

The project is intended to be completed by December 2024 with tools and recommendations available no later than January 2025. For a visual of the timeline of the primary deadlines refer to **Fig. 1**

below.

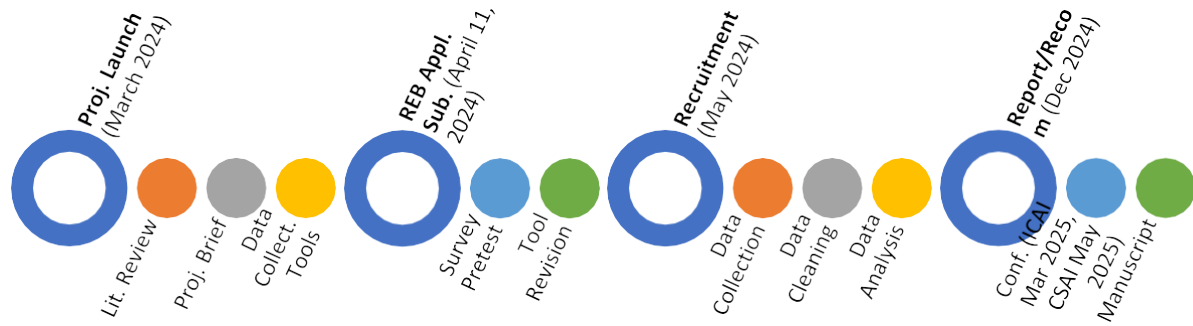


Fig. 1 Project Timeline

Knowledge Mobilization

Knowledge dissemination of the research will take the following formats:

1. **Presentations.** The results of the surveys, focus groups, and interviews will be presented to the Deans' Council, within the college community upon request, and at an academic conference, if accepted. The results of the document analysis will be presented to the Deans' Council.
2. **Publications.** The recommendations will be provided to the Deans' Council. The assessment tool will be publicly available under a Creative Commons license. Survey, focus group, and interview findings will be summarized in a report to be published internally, in the institutional repository, and in a peer-reviewed scholarly journal. The results of the document analysis will not be published out of respect for the college's internal information and reputation.
3. **Educational Materials.** Results may be used to create academic integrity resources shared internally with members of the college community or externally for educational purposes. The tool created by the research team will be publicly available under Creative Commons Attribution

NonCommercial-ShareAlike 4.0 International License.

Intellectual Property Statement

As set out in Bow Valley College's Intellectual Property Policy (#300-2-14), "all IP created by College employees, contractors, learners and volunteers in the execution of their duties or in collaboration with external partners under the auspices and authority of the College shall be the property of the College" (p. 1).

It is understood that the project will result in knowledge that is generated in collaboration with members of the research team and therefore, co-investigators cannot represent results as their own work.

Members of the research team developing and sharing knowledge from an Indigenous perspective may wish to take ownership of the materials created as sole authors (First Nations Information Governance Centre, 2024). Researchers will include an acknowledgement of others who supported and provided feedback on the work.

Authorship Guidelines and Publication Ethics

Authorship will be determined following standard practices and based on substantive contribution to the forms of knowledge dissemination. The research team member who contributed the most to that output's production will be listed first, and the rest in order of their contribution. To help guide us we follow the recommendations and protocols from the International Committee of Medical Journal Editors (2024).

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